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SUBJECT: Media Authority Issues Further Rulings; Bemba Media Resume Broadcasting

REF: A) KINSHASA 1505, B) KINSHASA 1472, C) KINSHASA 1470,

D)KINSHASA 1434, E) KINSHASA 1401, F) KINSHASA 1388,

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¶11. (U) Summary: Bemba-owned TV stations, which had nearly been destroyed by fire, have resumed broadcasting. A pro-Bemba radio station, whose signal was shut down in late August, is also back on the air. The High Media Authority (HAM) suspended or reprimanded two Kinshasa TV stations September 26 for proscribed rhetoric, following a series of other sanctions. To show its support for the HAM, the Embassy today signed a small grant to help it reconstitute its library which was destroyed in July. End Summary

Bemba Media, Phoenix-like

¶12. (U) On September 21, Bemba-owned Canal Kin TV and Canal Congo TV recovered from a dramatic fire. Scarcely three days after the conflagration which destroyed their studios (ref C), the two TV stations are back on the air. Pro-Bemba Radio Liberte Kinshasa (RALIK radio) is also back, after a 37-day "blackout" which began August 20 as guards of President Joseph Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba began a three-day firefight. Bemba media were back on the air in time to cover the Vice President's rally at the FIKIN fair grounds on September 23 (ref A), and well in time for the formal second-round campaign period, which commences October 13. The HAM, too

¶13. (U) Itself a victim of violence on July 27, the High Media Authority nonetheless continues its work of sanctioning media provocateurs. The moderator of Moliere TV political talk show "Salient Issues" was reprimanded and the show suspended September 26 by the High Media Authority (HAM) for a 15-day period. The TV station itself was suspended for 48 hours. The offense was defamatory, hate-filled statements made by Francis Kalombo, a newly-elected member of the National Assembly from the pro-Kabila PPRD. Mr. Kalombo is himself now under a 15-day ban from the media. Like most broadcast media, Moliere TV signed a pledge to respect rules of journalistic ethics one month ago (ref C). The pro-Bemba Radio Television Lisanga, which also signed the pledge, was reprimanded for allowing public incitation to violence.

¶14. (U) On September 24, the HAM imposed a 15-day media embargo on several politicians for engaging in ethnic-based rhetoric (i.e., extolling "Congolite"). They were losing presidential candidate Roger Lumbala, UDPS party officials Jean-Baptiste Bomanza (party spokesman) and Firmin Kama, and Christian Badibangi. The HAM imposed a 30-day media embargo for the same offense on another losing presidential candidate, Joseph O lenghankoy, and suspended his radio station Radio Sankuru Liberte for 45 days. O lenghankoy's FONUS party rejected the HAM ban. The head of a prominent Congolese

human rights organization, Floribert Chebeya (Voice for the Voiceless), reportedly criticized the HAM for imposing a Damocles Sword over all media and politicians.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: With Bemba media back on the air so quickly, the already strained political atmosphere is now free, at least, of recriminations that the MLC presidential candidate was disadvantaged in the media campaign (ref B). Its return, however, will likely further polarize the public rhetoric as the October 29 election approaches.

¶16. (SBU) Comment cont'd: The HAM indeed has its work cut out for it as it bravely soldiers forth to try to keep the media campaign on an even keel. On September 28 the Ambassador presided over the signing of a small public affairs grant, which will help the HAM reconstitute its archives destroyed when HAM headquarters were looted on July 27. End Comment.

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